



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Heather Doe
515-725-3417
515-975-6769 cell
heather.doe@iowa.gov

Iowa Awarded \$22 Million Federal GEAR UP Grant to Improve College Readiness and Access in the State
Iowa is one of 10 states awarded a federal statewide GEAR UP Grant

Des Moines, IA., September 23, 2014 –The Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid) announced today that the agency was awarded a seven-year statewide Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant by the U.S. Department of Education totaling \$22 million. The agency will receive \$3.2 million of the total for the first academic year, 2014-15. Iowa was one of 10 states awarded a state grant to improve college readiness and increase college attendance and completion rates, especially among low-income and first-generation students.

“We know that the future of Iowa’s economic success is dependent upon a well-educated workforce,” stated Governor Branstad. “While the percent of students who enroll in college immediately after high school graduation has increased for middle- and upper-income students, it has remained stagnant for low-income students,” said Branstad. “GEAR UP Iowa addresses these problems by raising low-income students’ awareness of college and financial aid options, increasing their participation in academically challenging courses and supporting them through the college admissions process.”

By the end of the decade over two-thirds of all jobs in Iowa are projected to require education or training beyond high school. Yet, less than 40 percent of Iowa’s nearly 1.6 million working-age adults have at least an associate’s degree.¹ The statewide GEAR UP grant will help expand successful methods to reach more first generation and at-risk students across the state and will help Iowa to close this gap.

-more-

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2008-2012 5-year estimates.

With these federal grant dollars, Iowa College Aid's GEAR UP Iowa program will serve an estimated 6,300 students in low-income schools beginning in the seventh grade and follow them through high school and into their first year of college. The program utilizes partnerships to provide services and programming to increase the number of students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. This grant will specifically focus upon building a framework of stronger student pipelines to college access and success, providing services to students, parents, schools and colleges and supporting counselor leadership while embedding college- and career-readiness into schools' comprehensive school improvement and Iowa Core implementation processes.

"We are so excited to be awarded our second statewide GEAR UP Grant," said Karen Misjak, executive director of Iowa College Aid, the state agency charged with administering the grant. "Since its inception in 1999, GEAR UP grants have provided educational outcomes for millions of low-income, minority and disadvantaged students across the United States. Iowa College Aid looks forward to helping a new cohort of students recognize the value of higher education and ultimately increasing educational attainment in Iowa."

This is the second award of this type to Iowa, with the first grant funded from 2008-2014. For the first year of the new grant, Iowa College Aid will receive \$3,206,922. The grant amount over seven years totals \$22,379,301 and represents 50 percent of the total project budget. The other 50 percent of program costs will be covered in the form of non-federal matching dollars from 36 partners across the state, totaling \$22,670,801.

For more information about GEAR UP Iowa, contact Iowa College Aid at 877-272-4456 or go www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.

###

About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission

Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over \$64.0 million annually, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being used to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. More information is available at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.